



Quiet Tourism, the new luxury, an experience in hospitality

João Martim Villa-Nova

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Author – Martim Villa-Nova

Abstract

This study explores “Quiet Luxury” in Portuguese luxury hotels, aiming to understand luxury experiences and key factors guests value, proposing the “Quiet Tourism” module. Methodologically, it analyses 2435 reviews across seven Portuguese luxury hotels, employing qualitative and mixed-method content analyses, using Leximancer. Results reveal that luxury hospitality is increasingly centred around unique, individualised experiences, emphasising superior service and authenticity. The contribution of this research is, at the theoretical level, to build a framework of the current luxury hospitality in Portugal, highlighting the shift towards subtle, customised luxury experiences. On the methodological level, qualitative analysis will further the meanings of luxury hospitality.

Key words: Quiet Luxury, Experience, Wellbeing, Luxury, Portugal

Título – Turismo silencioso, o novo luxo, uma experiência na hospitalidade

Autor – Martim Villa-Nova

Resumo

Este estudo explora o “luxo silencioso” em hotéis de luxo portugueses, com o objetivo de conceptualizar as experiências do luxo e os fatores-chave valorizados pelos hóspedes, propondo o modelo de “turismo silencioso”. Metodologicamente, analisa 2435 avaliações relativas a sete hotéis de luxo portugueses, empregando análises de conteúdo qualitativas e mistas, utilizando o Leximancer. Os resultados revelam que a hospitalidade de luxo está cada vez mais centrada em experiências únicas e pessoais, com um serviço de excelência e autenticidade. A contribuição desta pesquisa é, ao nível teórico, formular a composição atual de uma experiência na hospitalidade de luxo, em Portugal, destacando a transição para experiências de luxo subtis e personalizadas. A nível metodológico, contribui utilizando análise qualitativa para explorar os significados da hospitalidade de luxo.

Palavras-chave: Luxo silencioso, Experiência, Bem-estar, Luxo, Portugal

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1. Introduction

Luxury is a world of its own: a concept, an industry, and a strategy. In common stands the aspiration of becoming non-comparable to others, better known as the anti-laws of marketing (Kapferer, 2014). An industry forecasted to reach EUR 851 billion by 2025 (Boston Consulting Group & Comité Colbert, 2022) is about the demand for excellence, comprising the most sophisticated level a product may attain, aiming to go beyond the extra mile. It is a legacy built on maximum attention to the business value chain, matching its offer with the end-consumer individual truth and values. It is the embodiment of moments and experiences enabled, furthermore, by the brand's intangible assets. Typically associated with the most excellent quality, some decadence, extreme comfort (Coste-Manière & Hoffmann, 2012; Hansen & Wänke, 2011; Minor & Heyes, 2021), and, of course, with concepts such as exclusivity and high price (Kapferer & Laurent, 2016), being rarity a cause (or consequence) for the latter, crafting this homogeneous and intricate relationship we call Luxury (Heyes & Lashley, 2017).

Furthermore, it can be seen from two perspectives: of a product or an experience. The first focuses on features such as security, amenities, and location. The second approaches luxury as a means to obtaining more profound benefits, more emotional and hedonic (Gupta et al., 2022), delivering memorable experiences when using the product (Iloranta, 2021). This is the luxury dimension we propose diving into in this dissertation.

Luxury tourism is developed on these grounds, with the *"luxurification of the commonplace"*, being described as *"local, authentic, unique, experiential, boutique, and sustainably green offerings of premium quality that address people able to afford it and provide them with a special, rare experience"* (Istenič & Bajec, 2021, p. 5). This uniqueness supports the consumer's wish for self-expression, becoming more personal (Iloranta, 2021). It is about quality and customisation, contrary to mass tourism, which is quantity-oriented (Kapferer, 2014). More than that, it is about delivering to consumers symbolic, emotional and individual meaning besides the functional one (Gupta et al., 2022; Iloranta, 2022), being coined as an *"experiential economy"* (Heyes, 2021, p. 1) or a new luxury period (Thomsen et al., 2020), made up of tangible and intangible assets, that are *"scarce, experiential, and agentic"* (Iloranta, 2022, p. 2).

According to Bain's and European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance's report (European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance et al., 2022) on *"High-End Tourism*

Study”, although it only makes up 2% of hospitality structures, the high-end market is worth EUR 130–170 billion and accounts for 22% of total tourism spending. Moreover, luxury travellers influence local communities greatly and spend eight times as much as the typical visitor. Discovering new places, especially in well-known and developing nations, appeals to tourists who are becoming more inquisitive and conscious of sustainable experiences and flexible and customised tourism (Bilro, 2015), which are some of luxury hospitality's pillars.

The benefits of high-end travel extend beyond its financial gains and include the creation of jobs, improving the image of the Hospitality Industry as a whole, drawing in investment, and intangible gains or soft spillovers, which are particularly significant, creating a halo effect, which elevates the perception of other travel destinations within the same nation. According to European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance forecasts, high-end tourism can double or triple its current value to as much as EUR 520 billion in revenue by 2030–2035 by taking action on numerous strategic levers.

In recent years, a new definition of luxury has emerged, which we would like to name “Quiet Tourism”: one that adds sustainability, mindfulness and improved consciousness to the equation (European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance et al., 2022). European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance and Bain “*High-End Tourism Study*” mentioned that “*high-end tourists are seeking greater purpose from their travel experiences and embracing what was once the backpacker mentality of 'leave no trace' by easing their footprint*”. We are witnessing new mindsets, new consuming habits, and, furthermore, the design of new experiences to meet such demands.

Much has been researched by the literature on luxury, primarily highlighting its conspicuous consumption, perceiving it as elitist, exclusive, symbolic, prestigious, costly, and strongly tied to the items and their features (Iloranta & Komppula, 2021). The new understanding of luxury as experiential, agentic, seen as a consumer-defined approach, as the basis for value-in-use, more emotional, and emphasising the enrichment of tourists' lives has not been studied enough (Thomsen et al., 2020). Considering the gaps in the literature, we propose the following research questions and objective:

RQ1- How are luxury experiences in Portuguese hotels perceived to meet a sense of being and place?

RQ2 – What are the key factors tourists value when choosing a luxury Hotel?

RO – The main objective of this study is to evaluate the tourism facilities in Portugal that fall under the concept of “Quiet luxury”.

2. Literature review

2.1 Luxury in hospitality

Over time, a few luxury models that combined societal and personal benefits, values, or dimensions were put forward. We propose looking at some Literature points of view and terms used when discussing the luxury industry and product.

Veblen, for instance, described it as niche and elite restrained, a constraint to medium or lower social status, and lavish (Trigg, 2001). Kapferer suggested that luxury can be explained based on quality, conspicuousness, uniqueness, and social value (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Maslow has already stated that it contributes to self-fulfilment (Maslow, 1948). Therefore, luxury is an exceptional extension of individuals' social, intellectual, and personal lives.

Vickers and Renand proposed a relatively hedonistic explanation of luxury that is based on experience, function, and symbolism (Vickers & Renand, 2003), paving the way for Danziger to interpret as existing an old luxury versus a new luxury (Brun & Castelli, 2013). The first equivalent to the luxury product dimension is talked about in the introduction. In other words, it is a luxury that relies on possessions and features. Instead, the new luxury is related to experiences. This new reality has practical and psychological advantages, which depend more "*on the way we travel than on where we travel*" (Correia et al., 2022, p. 2). Jhamb et al. state the significant components of the luxury experience: sensory, intellectual, behavioural, and emotive domains (Jhamb et al., 2020, p. 923).

Researchers agree that luxury experiences are expensive, exquisite, and one-of-a-kind, which evokes hedonic pleasure, suggesting that such experiences include functional, social, individual, experiential, and aesthetic benefits. Most models elaborate on similar qualities under different titles. The contemporary school of thought deems the increasing personalisation of services, products and experiences, the differentiation between ultra-luxury and affordable luxury, and the reinforcement of privacy against the classic old luxury ostentation. Lastly, there is the rise of holistic and well-being destinations (European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance et al., 2022) as opposed to social network destinations.

The literature has been studying luxury for a long time, with recurrent discussions on theories such as Veblen's *Theory of Conspicuous Consumption* (Han et al., 2010), mentioned before, the bandwagon effect or the snob effect (Iloranta, 2021). We prefer to focus our attention on this conscientious and experiential trend in the industry.

Moreover, most of the literature deepens its interest in the “*Stimulus-organism-response*” (*S-O-R*) perspective, conceptualising the customer experience through the consumer's reaction to stimuli (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020), being a great starting point. Alongside it, one must highlight the “*Sensemaking*” theoretical perspective, one that studies the effects of an experience, as “*self-image congruity and sense of place (...) significantly related to subjective well-being*” (Ke-Fang et al., 2023, p. 491). Academics defend the *sensemaking* theory, taking an interpretive approach to investigate “*how individuals create meaning for their ongoing experiences and how people make retrospective sense of what occurs*” to examine issues related to the tourism experience (Rather et al., 2021, p. 491).

The composition of the two perspectives mentioned above - *S-O-R* and *Sensemaking* - is considerably in tune with the conscientious and experience-centric trend in luxury tourism, or one could coin it as “Quiet Tourism”? A holistic module focused on the *art de vivre*.

Table 1.

Conventional and unconventional luxury

<i>Conventional Luxury</i>	<i>Unconventional Luxury</i>
Receptive (marketing-led, acquired, existing)	Agentic (consumer defined, enacted, constructed)
Product-focused (public symbolism, conspicuous, enduring)	Experiential (private symbolism, inconspicuous, ephemeral)
Ontologically scarce (expensive, accessible to few, owned)	Epistemologically scarce (inexpensive, accessible to many, possessed)

Source: (Thomsen et al., 2020)

2.1.1 The consumer, from a receiver to a value creator

The agentic understanding makes the consumer a value creator instead of a bare receiver of luxury (Thomsen et al., 2020) (see Table 1). After all, consumers decide whether a product or service carries value throughout their purchase decision, for instance. If the true definition of luxury were based on product attributes, then the price would reflect both the functional cost and the product's scarcity. Instead, it is primarily a social construct with advantages that are thought to extend beyond the product or service. Therefore, it is relevant to admit an experience-

based, fluid, and transient vision that focuses on how customers experience, give, make, or share luxury - instead of merely owning and displaying it.

2.1.2 The product, from owned to experienced

Luxury is changing from owning to experiencing, from “having to being” (Thomsen et al., 2020) (see Table 1). This updated perception of luxury concentrates on the performed, produced and enacted meanings of an experience rather than obtaining already-existing luxury goods and services that are symbolically charged (Ke-Fang et al., 2023). Customers have the ability to decide how, when, and where they get to enjoy luxurious experiences that enhance their lives.

2.1.3 The singularity of an experience, the new scarcity

In contrast to traditional conceptualisations, which typically depict luxury as a limited resource, a new perception of luxury simply limits it to the customer's views (Thomsen et al., 2020). Therefore, conventional conceptualisations of luxury - where luxury is perceived as expensive, (individually) owned, and widely desired, but only accessible to a select few - highlight ontological scarcity (Kapferer, 2014; Kapferer & Laurent, 2016). Thomsen et al. reinterpret scarcity, defending another notion named “epistemological scarcity”, one that focuses on the singularity of the luxury encounter, which can be inexpensively induced and discovered in unexpected locations (Thomsen et al., 2020) (see Table 1).

Theoretically, though, anyone who knows about it may access this. In this instance, ownership or worth to other people is less important for the emergence of luxury than the presence of the luxury object, that is, its internalisation and self-relevance. According to Thomsen et al., the customer perceives the product in an individualised, subjective, and contentious form. Therefore, one can admit a more inclusive approach to luxury as it is accessible to everyone via one's creative approach to their consuming practices rather than through financial means. Luxury moments may be classified into five categories: interrupting, climactic, disrupting, ritualistic, and terminating (Thomsen et al., 2020). The degree to which these moments diverge from daily life determines how luxurious they are, as long as they provide a sensory distinction, even if they are brief in time.

The Luxury Hotel

A clear definition of what a luxury hotel is, or should be, does not exist. However, the literature has been describing characteristics that assist in developing the concept, for instance, the excellent locations, spaciousness, fine cuisine, cleanliness, elegant design, and ability to provide guests with highly personalised services and amenities, as well as seclusion and security (Mattila, 1999).

Moreover, the exceptional focus on customer satisfaction and the connection established between the luxury hotel as a product and the guest's life leads us to unavoidable emotional experiences. Human interaction, or the service, is vital for the latter through a high staff-to-guest ratio (Han & Back, 2007; Mattila & Enz, 2002).

Lastly, the power of branding and positioning as the signature of a hotel chain, its products and services, for instance, any enterprise from the Belmond or Ritz-Carlton companies speak for themselves just for the fact that they carry the legacy of their group's brand (Xu & Chan, 2010).

2.2 New trends in hospitality

Regarding industry trends, various alternative tourism models, including nature-based tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism, are increasingly being sought after (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2016). Though many terms, including "soft tourism," "low-impact tourism", "alternative tourism", "responsible tourism", "special interest tourism", and "sustainable tourism", have been used to refer to various forms of tourism, the idea of alternative tourism is still somewhat nebulous. It is important to note that we are not discussing whether tourism can be sustainable at its core, but whether such elements are on the agenda or its storytelling, in line with the industry's general conscientious and well-being trend.

Furthermore, there has been an increase in the creation of integrated resorts, golf resorts and communities, resort communities, residential development, and vacation cities (Bilro, 2015).

Are we devising a quiet tourism destination?

Do the Portuguese hospitality and luxury tourism sectors follow the same experiential and transient trend as the luxury sector? We propose understanding how all the concepts

characterising the current luxury play in the Portuguese market. For instance, are we creating personalised services? Do we offer privacy or ostentation? Are we a social network destination, or do we focus on delivering well-being?

Notwithstanding the extensive study, the following query remains unresolved: What constitutes a luxury experience, and what qualities are luxury visitors seeking?

We propose studying how each of the notions mentioned above that conceptualise luxury, according to the literature, are behaving today by analysing the reviews of the quiet hospitality players in Portugal to understand if we are facing, in fact, the birth of “Quiet Tourism” in Portugal.

2.3. Relevant dimensions for a new concept of quiet luxury in hospitality

The current dissertation gathered concepts that make up dimensions of the current luxury product or service, which were previously proposed and evaluated by Correia et al. (Correia et al., 2022). Each of them may have a particular impact on the consumer's experience. Some dimensions are tangible – the social, functional and aesthetic – and others are intangible – the individual and experiential.

Social dimension

As people connect with others in ways that relate to them, want to be like them, or crave prominent, prestigious status symbols, the social component becomes apparent (Correia et al., 2022). Luxury consumption is a means of improving one's self-image and gaining peer acceptance. According to Leibenstein (Leibenstein, 1950), a person's social position may be demonstrated by either following the crowd or standing out from it. The customers' public consciousness is the main factor linked to these consequences. Conversely, those with a personal awareness are inclined to prioritise individual self-rewarding more, a phenomenon referred to as "interpersonal versus intergroup behaviour".

Functional dimension

The desire to own long-lasting, high-quality things that give status is linked to functional motives (Yang & Mattila, 2016). Typically, objects with this dimension are utilitarian. The physical environment elements guests perceive as opulent include atmosphere, multisensory,

space and function, signs, symbols, and artefacts. "Functional" refers to product dimensions, quality, and design elements (Walls et al., 2011, p. 178). Since the functional dimension is related to the opinions of usefulness, quality, and novelty, it appears to be simpler to find in users' reviews.

Aesthetics dimension

According to Stiehler et al. (Stiehler et al., 2016), aesthetics is "the branch of philosophy that deals with questions of beauty and artistic taste". Because of this, a person's knowledge, understanding, tastes, and sentiments towards a luxury brand form the foundation of their views of luxury.

Individual dimension

Because *"each individual has various tourism experiences, due to different backgrounds, values, attitudes and beliefs brought to the environment in which they are travelling and experiencing over time"* (Seyfi et al., 2019, p. 341), it is challenging to define this dimension because it is subjective and personal.

The self-reward value, which involves engaging in opulent consumption to forge one's identity or satisfy personal desires, embodies the individual dimension (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). In this way, it is anticipated that consumers would purchase a luxury commodity based on how the object fits with their image. Due to their participation in a luxury consuming experience, customers could regard themselves as more respectable. This component includes individual views of luxury shaped by self-consciousness, hedonic incentives, and cultural values (Liao & Wang, 2009).

Experiential dimension

As previously noted in this study, more and more travellers are seeking experiences, which has piqued the curiosity of various researchers (Jhamb et al., 2020). Chaney et al. (Chaney et al., 2018) hypothesis, which is based on earlier research, admits that the reason for these developments in the tourism sector, which are connected to the experience paradigm, may be attributed to the industry's focus on creating unforgettable experiences. Furthermore, the concept of experience has significantly impacted the services industry, primarily due to the

significance of the jointly created experience between the customer and the service provider during transactions.

Seven values are used by Stiehler et al. (Stiehler et al., 2016) to explain the experience value: self-esteem, politics, efficiency, excellence, play, aesthetics, and spirituality. Additionally, Wu and Liang (Wu & Liang, 2009) suggest that the value of the experience is determined by the customers' evaluations of the effectiveness, quality, fun, and aesthetics of service interactions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research approach

The current study clarifies the role that each of the notions that define contemporary luxury play in the Portuguese hospitality scenario and, perhaps, if “Quiet Tourism” does exist. We propose answering the following research questions and focusing on the ultimate research objective:

RQ1 - How are luxury experiences in Portuguese hotels perceived to meet a sense of being and place?

RQ2 - What are the key factors tourists value when choosing a luxury hotel?

RO - The main objective of this study is to evaluate the tourism facilities in Portugal that fall under the concept of quiet luxury.

It was considered that using a qualitative approach would be the best testing methodology. A collection of reviews of high-end hospitality players in Portugal was gathered and analysed using established rating standards and considering previously examined literature.

After the data was gathered, Leximancer 5.0, a content analysis program, was used to investigate this further. We hope our research will add to the knowledge of these domains and their interrelatedness.

3.2. The data source and collection

The information was gathered from reviews and includes the viewpoints of seven hospitality players, from which 2435 reviews were collected. This research design used open-ended questions to promote the self-expression of individual beliefs, ideas, and expertise. They were as clear as: "Write a review. Stories like yours are what help travellers have better trips. Share your experience" (Tripadvisor website). The review platforms made the questions, namely Booking, Tripadvisor, and Google Business Reviews. To extract data from those platforms, the software Botster was run. All collected data were stored in Excel spreadsheets. We removed user nicknames and dates to ensure anonymity and avoid potential bias from data interpretation.

Every hospitality player from which reviews were collected was chosen according to eligibility requirements to guarantee appropriate targeting (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Eligible Criteria

A.	Operating in Portugal	Territory under Portuguese Jurisdiction (<i>Artigo 5.º - (Território) - Constituição Da República Portuguesa – BDJUR, n.d.</i>).
B.	Rated with five or more stars	(Diário Da República, 1.a Série-N.º 82-28 de Abril de 2008, Sistema de Classificação de Estabelecimentos Hoteleiros, de Aldeamentos Turísticos e de Apartamentos Turísticos).
C.	Fitting in the notion of a Luxury Hotel	Excellent locations, spaciousness, fine cuisine, cleanliness, elegant design, and ability to provide guests with highly personalised services and excellent customer satisfaction, as well as seclusion and security (as seen in chapter 2.1).
D.	Fitting in dimensions of luxury	Social, Functional, Aesthetic, Individual and Experiential (as seen in chapter 2.3).

Source: (own elaboration)

3.2.1. The target hospitality

We have collected reviews from hospitality endeavours spread throughout the country, from North to South, that fit the previously studied model of “Quiet Tourism”, intending to enhance the visibility of this possible emerging trend in luxury hospitality.

In order to investigate it, 2435 respondents' reviews were gathered and analysed, corresponding to a total of 7 hospitality businesses that matched an overall high score in terms of location, cleanliness, service and value (see Table 3). The data corresponds to 13 years of reviews, from 2010 to 2023.

The sample concerned reviews from only five or more-star hotels operating in Portugal that fit the notion of luxury hotels and the diverse dimensions of luxury studied in Chapter 2.3. Regarding geographical location, 57.14% were in Alentejo, 28.57% were in Algarve, and 14.28% were in the North.

In terms of locations, most of these endeavours can be found either in Alentejo, Algarve or in the Douro region, which is explained in the first place by its intense tourism industry, and namely its connection to alternative, sustainable and conscious forms of hospitality, concordant with the conscientious and well-being trend of the current “*experiential economy*” (Heyes, 2021, p. 1).

Regarding accommodation size, most businesses have a minimal number of villas – which can have up to 7 rooms each. Lastly, all the reviewed accommodations offer each guest the most diverse array of activities and experiences, with an almost tailormade and customised service.

Table 3.*Demographics*

	Location	Established in	N° of Rooms/suites	Personalised experiences and activities
Herdade Da Malhadinha Nova Country House & Spa	Beja, Alentejo	2008	>26 (Most of which are part of villas)	>50
Sublime Comporta Country Retreat & Spa	Grândola, Alentejo	2014	>67 rooms (some are part of villas)	>12
Vila Vita Parc Resort	Porches, Algarve	1992	>203 (some are part of villas)	>50
Six Senses Douro Valley	Lamego, North	2007	>71 (some are part of villas)	>12
Pine Cliffs – The Luxury Collection	Albufeira, Algarve	1992	>365 (some are part of villas)	>12
Quinta da Comporta Wellness Boutique Hotel	Grândola, Alentejo	2019	>65 (some are part of villas)	>9
Vermelho Melides by Louboutin	Grândola, Alentejo	2023	13	>3

Source: (own elaboration)

3.3. Data analysis and tool

The current investigation uses both quantitative and qualitative content analyses (Zhang & Cole, 2016), a mixed-method approach. This strategy was chosen as it is considered the most effective way to examine content by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Weber, 1990).

The Leximancer program was chosen for its interface that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies from information science, facilitating the analysis of intricate textual data (Carvalho et al., 2022). The software is a computer-assisted tool for quantitative data analysis. It is specifically designed to perform unsupervised semantic mapping of natural

language. The software uses statistical text properties to automate the analysis process and extract semantic and relational information (Sotiriadou et al., 2014, p. 218).

The textual data from the reviews is used to generate a conceptual map that graphically represents the data, allowing the reader to comprehend the relationships between concepts and topics. Additionally, the map displays the quantity and intensity of these connections (Tseng et al., 2015). The concepts will be organised into themes, which are comprised of a set of closely interconnected notions. The closeness of the concepts within a topic signifies the intensity of their connection (Liu et al., 2019). The clustering approach was employed to graphically depict the main themes and the relationships between distinct concepts (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). According to Sotiriadou et al. (2014), the Leximancer software is an effective content analysis tool that finds pertinent themes and concepts extracted from textual and relational data and semantic information.

The Leximancer programme produced a thesaurus using a machine-learning algorithm to choose the most suitable terms from the text data. These words were then organised into thematic groups. The following section presents a concept map on "Luxury experiences in Portuguese luxury hotels" and on "Key factors that tourists value in a hotel". The frequency analysis findings encompass the extracted most-used terms obtained by Leximancer, enabling the comparison of experiences. We employed quantitative content analysis to condense guests' impressions by examining the frequency of word occurrences (Zhang & Mao, 2012). According to Leximancer, the idea map (see Figure 1) explains the co-occurrence of concepts with seven developing themes grouped within the same context, as well as the frequency of terms (Liu et al., 2019).

The research was carried out using Wolcott's (Wolcott, 1994) methodology, which is divided into three main stages: description (which primarily uses the exact transcripts from the reviews), analysis (which finds essential concepts and themes as shown in Table 4), and interpretation (which makes sense of those meanings concerning literature).

4. Results

To answer the first research question ("How are luxury experiences in Portuguese hotels perceived to meet a sense of being and place?"), Leximancer analyses produced a word co-occurrence matrix from which concepts could be identified, and then grouped the concepts into themes based on how often they appeared in blocks of text, as shown in Figure 1.

To answer the second research question ("What are the key factors tourists value when choosing a luxury Hotel?") Leximancer produced a web of concepts specific to the theme "hotel".

Sample characteristics

The sample consisted of 2435 consumers who had stayed or had had an experience at one of the seven hospitality facilities (see Table 3. for demographic attributes).

4.1 Luxury experiences in hospitality in Portuguese luxury hotels

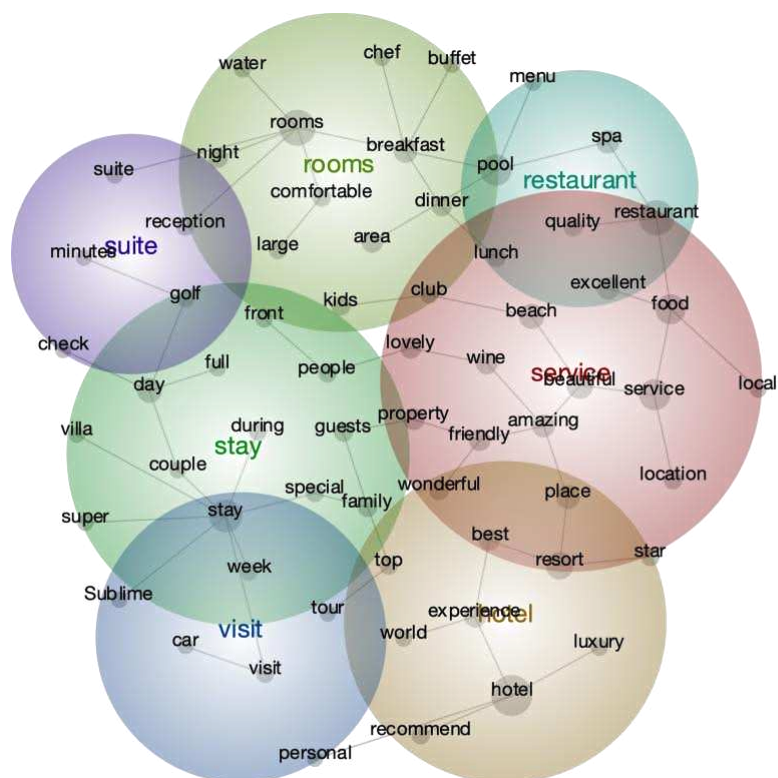
The qualitative results aid in determining the significance of the findings from the web content analysis, such as experiences, views, and emotions. As a result, the primary themes and concepts were identified. The Leximancer-generated concept map (see Figure 1) highlights seven key themes that emerged from the assessments of luxury hospitality experiences. The map consists of small grey dots representing concepts, organised into more significant coloured spheres to denote different themes (Wu et al., 2014). The primary themes (see Table 4) in relation to connectedness and significance are "service" (23.67%, 4143 hits), "hotel" (22.73%, 3979 hits), "rooms" (16.20%, 2836 hits), "stay" (15.24%, 2667 hits), "restaurant" (14.22%, 2489 hits), "visit" (4.28%, 749 hits), and "suite" (3.62%, 635 hits), together reflecting the experiences of luxury hospitality guests.

Illustrating the exploration of the concept map, the themes "service" and "hotel" exhibit an overlap and strong connection. The associated concepts, such as the physical spaces and the hospitality service attributes, are closely linked and influence one another.

Another instance is the theme "stay", which has a great degree of overlapping with other themes. The act of sharing boundaries indicates a strong correlation with other concepts. People "stay" to enjoy the physical spaces - "suite, "rooms", "hotel"- and the experiential dimensions - "service" and "visit".

Figure 1.

Concept Map on luxury experiences in Portuguese luxury hotels



Source: (Leximancer outputs)

Table 4.

Themes and concepts

Themes	Concepts
Service	Service, food, beautiful, beach, place, amazing, excellent, wine, friendly, property, lovely, location, local
Hotel	Hotel, resort, experience, best, wonderful, recommend, star, top, luxury, world
Rooms	Rooms, breakfast, area, dinner, night, kids, comfortable, large, buffet, club, water, chef
Stay	Stay, day, family, guests, during, people, special, front, full, couple, super, villa
Restaurant	Restaurant, pool, spa, quality, lunch, menu
Visit	Visit, week, Sublime, tour, car, personal
Suite	Suite, reception, golf, check, minutes

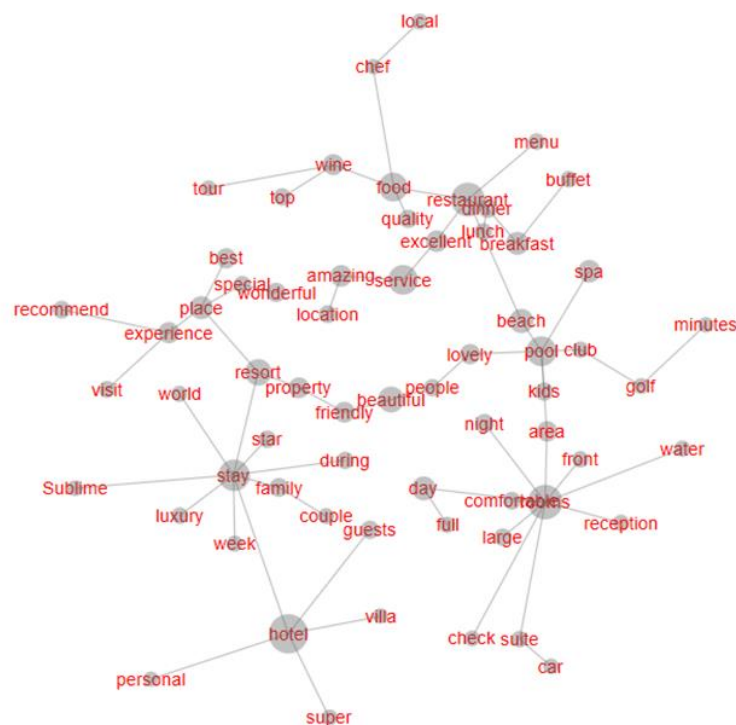
Source: (own elaboration based on Leximancer outputs)

4.2 Key factors that tourists value in a hotel

To deeply understand which factors guests are looking for in a luxury hotel, we chose to focus on the cluster "hotel", as seen in Figure 2, finding out the concepts underlying the previous concept map shown in Figure 1. This map consists of grey dots representing concepts bound to one another.

Figure 2.

Key factors that are valued by tourists in a hotel



Source: (Leximancer outputs)

5. Discussion

This section analyses the tourism facilities that fall under “Quiet Luxury Tourism”. Initially, it examines the guests' general portrayals of the luxury experience in our seven hospitality enterprises and the essential characteristics conveyed by the topics in the idea map.

The subsequent sub-chapter examines the pivotal aspects highly esteemed by guests in a luxury hotel.

The research was limited to concentrating on significant concepts and topics (Crofts & Bisman, 2010). These were determined using the frequency of co-occurrence and a meticulous evaluation of the meaning of the selected concepts. To be more precise, the analysis detected terms or ideas that lacked significance (such as "ok," "great," and "often") or were overly general (such as "facilities" and "facility"). These identified words were then removed from the subsequent study.

5.1 Luxury experiences in hospitality in Portuguese luxury hotels

An examination of visitor evaluations from the seven hospitality establishments offers valuable insights into the general depiction of luxury experiences in Portuguese hotels. The concept map emphasises the tangible and intangible aspects that contribute to the visitors' perception of the experience. Sense of being and place, that is, the effect of the experience on the guest, is therefore consolidated by two realities: the tangible dimensions, which are the facilities – "hotel", "rooms", "restaurant", and "suite" -, and the intangible themed dimensions – "service", "stay", "visit". The tangible themes represent 56.77%, or 9939 hits, whilst the intangible ones represent 43.19% or 7559 hits.

At first glance, it may seem that the physical aspect, which is less ethereal or explicitly experiential, would define the luxury experience both in the past and present. Nevertheless, research has shown us that “Quiet Tourism” is on the horizon, being true luxury found in details, like the personalisation of a stay. Likewise, we thoroughly and systematically examine the many concepts and reactions presented throughout the concept map and the visual representation of themes and concepts that prove this new era of luxury.

Tangible dimensions of the luxury experience

The luxury “hotel” experience is greatly determined by its physical qualities (e.g. “hotel”, “resort”), such as its design, architecture, and facilities, but also by its positioning and excellence (e.g. “best”, “luxury”, “top”), which have specifically designed effects on the guest. It leads us to the previously studied definition of what constitutes a luxury hotel, notably encompassing exceptional sites, ample space, exquisite cuisine, immaculate cleanliness, sophisticated architecture, and the capacity to provide guests with highly tailored services and facilities, together with privacy and safety (Mattila, 1999). “Hotel” and “service” are interconnected and are indivisible. With concepts like “recommend” and “experience”, the

customer transitions from a passive recipient to an active value generator (Thomsen et al., 2020). Hence, it is essential to acknowledge a perception rooted in personal encounters, adaptable and temporary, with a specific emphasis on how customers encounter, contribute to, create, or distribute luxury rather than only possessing and showcasing it. Customers have the ability to decide how, when, and where they get to enjoy experiences that enhance their lives.

The “rooms” are significantly attached to their quality (e.g. “comfortable”, “large”), as the well-appointed spaces elevate the whole experience. Thus, “suites” are a particular style of lodging frequently linked to luxury and are linked to equally luxury-related concepts, such as “golf” and “Club”.

Regarding the “restaurant”, as would be expected, the eating experience is a crucial component of our high-end hospitality (e.g. “quality”, “excellent”, “chef”), and the provision of superior and “local” food and service significantly enhances the overall contentment of guests, explaining the overlapping and strong connection with “service”. What most reviews have in common is the fact that most mention the name of the chef, the sommelier, or host. This relationship is visible in reviews left by guests, such as:

“Special attention from the cordial manager x, magnificent professional, the cuisine is top of the top with great chefs and fresh and healthy ingredients”. “Cute little winery hotel. Cosy minimalist luxury rooms, beautiful design, and a very personal service. We had a great time indulging in wine tastings and the on-site restaurant overseen by a Michelin-star chef was absolute fabulous.”

Intangible dimensions of the luxury experience

Exceptional “service” is crucial in shaping customers' luxury experiences (Han & Back, 2007), as customised treatment boosts their sense of being and place, shown in reactions such as “amazing”, “excellent”, “lovely”, “wonderful” and “best”. Furthermore, the remarkable emphasis on customer satisfaction and establishing a relationship between the luxury hotel as a product and the guest's life inevitably results in profound emotional experiences (Mattila & Enz, 2002). Several luxury services and characteristics are displayed on the concept map, namely “chef” and “spa”. The latter is an example of the previously studied conscientious and experiential dimension of luxury and the “*Sensemaking*” theoretical perspective (Ke-Fang et al., 2023, p. 491).

Within “service”, we would like to emphasise “local”, as the previously studied concept of “*luxurification of the commonplace*” refers to the transformation of ordinary things into luxurious experiences, which are authentic, distinctive, immersive, and boutique (Istenič

& Bacustomers' p. 5). This distinctiveness reinforces the desire of guests to express themselves, making it more personal (Iloranta, 2022) through a customised experience, contrary to mass tourism (Kapferer, 2014). The correlation between this connection may be observed through the reviews provided by guests, exemplified as:

“What an amazing place, the staff is so friendly and always know you by name and your preference. The guest's wine selection is outstanding”. “Take time, sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery, the views, the history, the hillside vineyards, the picturesque Quintas. All these accompanied with excellent local wine and food on board and a knowledgeable staff, especially the owner.”

“The hotel is part of a farm, where they make their own wine, grow their pigs (pata negra), olives, and more. The staff is happy to take you on a tour of the farm, which was very interesting and a good learning experience. If you come at the right time, you can participate in the grape or olive harvest.”

“Stay” determines the scope of the experience (e.g. “couple”, “family”, “villa”, “week”, “visit”) and is considerably related to the “visit”, which enhances the whole experience by giving the chance to discover and participate in stimulating activities, whether within the hotel or its vicinity (e.g. “car”, “tour”, “personal”). After all, we are facing the rise of an “*experiential economy*” (Heyes, 2021, p. 1) or a new luxury period (Thomsen et al., 2020), in which a hospitality experience delivers “special” and “personal” symbolic, emotional and individual meanings to the guest (Gupta et al., 2022), therefore being “*scarce, experiential and agentic*” (Iloranta, 2022, p. 2). The new scarcity of luxury is the singularity and personalisation of an experience, which meets the individual dimension of luxury (Liao & Wang, 2009), as well as the experiential dimension (Jhamb et al., 2020), as seen in Chapter 2.3.

“This must be one of the best resorts in the world! It is very small, some 25 rooms and run by the family who live there. They started off establishing a vineyard and then slowly converted the local derelict barns and farm buildings in to rooms. Each furnished with stunning taste and personal touch. The activities offered reflect their own interests: horse riding, pottery - the mother is an expert and has made much of the ceramics used there-, wine making. There are at least 3 places to eat at and you feel like you are at a private weekend away as a guest of the family. Each building has a private pool and its own style. You are given a golf buggy to get around. It is a little remote, so you feel like you are in a very special place.”

“We received first class treatment all the time and the chef, x, cooked us a special dinner on the second night which was not on the menu. The owners of the estate, x and y, even came around and introduced themselves to every table which was so lovely.”

“The best service ever!! I loved the place so much that I wanted to stay more and cancel the rest of my trip. The facilities, the staff and the place were beyond extraordinary. Truly was the best place I have visited so far. I have no words to describe how welcoming and attentive all of the staff were, they made me feel like it was my property and not just a normal guest.”

5.2 Key factors that tourists value in a hotel

The second research question concentrates on the crucial elements that guests prioritise in a hotel within high-end hospitality. Examining the concept map reveals several interrelated topics that contribute to guests' overall assessment of a luxury hotel.

The map revolves around the “hotel”, which is closely associated with “luxury”, “star”, “resort”, and “property”.

These relationships emphasise the significance of the hotel’s prestige and the excellence of its amenities. Guests commonly link the term “star”, presumably referring to the star rating, with their expectations of high quality and luxury. The use of the terms “resort” and “property” indicates a desire for spacious and luxuriously furnished lodgings that provide diverse facilities and services, meeting the social, aesthetic, and individual dimensions of luxury discussed in Chapter 2.3.

Surrounding the central idea of “hotel” are groups of related concepts such as “experience”, “recommend”, “best”, “special”, and “visit”. This implies that customers place importance not just on the tangible characteristics of a hotel but also on the opportunities it provides for memorable encounters. A hotel that frequently receives recommendations or is regarded as the premier choice is known for delivering an extraordinary and distinctive experience, highlighting the importance of word-of-mouth and reputation to prospective visitors, as one can understand from reviews provided, such as the following:

“It's going to become a real hot spot, and it will be tough to get bookings. Well done to the owner and his team and keep pushing forward to become a world class and successful resort experience.”

Upon closer examination of the map, it becomes apparent that there is a significant focus on customisation and exclusivity, as shown by the use of terms such as “personal” and “special”. Consequently, we conclude that guests favour hotels that provide customised amenities and foster a sense of importance, based on reviews submitted, including this one:

“You get to the reception and not only the check in is done seated in the sofas but also the Manager makes sure we are well received and taken care. She is always around and knows our names which makes us feel at home.”

The notion of “visit” is also associated with “world”, “experience”, and “recommend”, implying that customers want a hotel encounter of exceptional quality and deserving of being shared with others.

Furthermore, the term “stay” seems to be a crucial element, connected to “family”, “couple”, “guests”, indicating the significance of the hotel meeting the needs of different group dynamics and intentions, with terms such as “spa” and “golf” and offering appropriate accommodations, such as “villa” for enhanced privacy, enough space, and well-being, in opposition to ostentatious forms of tourism or social network destinations.

“We stayed in one of the Villa's with a fireplace and private pool which allowed us privacy with all the luxuries of proper boutique resort. The villa was new, clean and beautifully designed.”

Finally, the coexistence of terms such as “food”, “restaurant”, “breakfast”, and “chef” close to “service” suggests that culinary superiority is a crucial aspect for customers. The calibre of cuisine and dining choices is pivotal in a high-end hotel.

Essentially, the concept map illustrates the main elements that customers appreciate in a luxury hotel. These elements range from the concrete characteristics of high quality and opulence to the ethereal aspects of customisation, reputation, and culinary mastery, as seen in the following quotes from reviews left by guests:

“This place is just heaven on earth. Quietness, everything is so beautiful, all the attentions, the service, the food, the spa. They make everything perfect for you to have the best stay and not think about anything else than relaxing.”

“It's difficult to describe a vibe or an energy, this place simply has it. I actually felt like I floated in air here. It's low density, eco luxe vibe carries throughout the property, from the privacy of a villa with its own pool, dedicated staff who anticipated my needs even before I did, the architecture, design, premium food & beverage offerings, spa, natural landscaping, vintage wines. So easy to get around, transfers to the chic beach club a few minutes away. I loved this property. But I think it was the gentile staff I will carry with me forever. I'm already booking my return next summer - and the property clearly has a high repeat guest rate given the kind familiarity I witnessed amongst staff and guests.”

“Wonderful hideaway in the middle of nowhere. An experience you will never forget. We stayed in one of the timeless suites with private pool which offers a maximum of privacy. You are on living farm and not in a hipster hotspot. We enjoyed the wonderful apartment with decorations from contemporary Portuguese designers, we also we will never forget the balloon ride and the warm hospitality of the staff. Also, the wine tasting you should not miss, the wine is produced biologically and has an outstanding taste.”

“Exceptional country château. Wonderful property, all premises are luxurious and very integrated to the general environment. Many options for guests,

From rooms to whole houses with private pools, a spa, and many other amenities, such as fishing, horse rides and visits to the winery. Wonderful staff, very attentive, friendly, and professional. Wonderful wines and food."

6. Conclusion

This study examined how luxury experiences are perceived and valued in Portuguese hotels. By qualitatively analyzing 2435 reviews over a span of thirteen years, the research aimed to answer two essential questions: how luxury experiences are perceived in terms of one's sense of self and place, and what factors are highly valued by tourists in luxury hotels.

The results demonstrate that luxury is progressively centred around distinctive and individualised encounters, highlighting superior service, exceptional amenities, and a profound sense of authenticity. The research effectively clarifies the correlation between luxury lodgings and the changing demands of discerning guests pursuing "Quiet Tourism".

Luxury experiences in Portuguese hotels are diverse, incorporating both tangible and intangible aspects. Quiet luxury tourism is defined by its thorough attention to detail, excellent "service", and complete "stay" experience, rather than relying only on the hotel's physical qualities. This study enhances our comprehension of visitors' perception and appreciation of "Quiet Tourism", providing insights into Portugal's panorama of luxury hospitality.

The data demonstrated that "service" is the core element, highlighting its significance in crafting the luxury experience. This aligns with "Quiet Tourism" concept of delivering a high-quality and subtle experience. The visitors' perceptions encompass the apparent aspects and the intangible elements, such as the sense of being recognised and attended to individually. The frequent occurrence of adjectives such as "wonderful" and "great" within the "service" cluster highlights the importance of emotional value in the luxury proposition, which meets the guests' increasing aspiration for a transforming experience that aligns with their identity and surroundings.

6.1 Theoretical Contribution

The contribution of this research is, at the theoretical level, to help building a framework for the current luxury hospitality (Correia et al., 2022). The study contributes to the field by enhancing our understanding of the current luxury in the hospitality business by proposing and testing a "Quiet Tourism" module made of different dimensions of luxury, proving that luxury is increasing its interest in intangible aspects. The current research was built upon luxury

theories by integrating the increasing phenomenon of “Quiet Luxury”, emphasising the transition from ostentatious to subtle and customised luxury experiences. Several aspects discussed in this research may be found in the literature. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of research that specifically examines the current elements of a luxury experience or the attracting features of a luxury hotel.

The current study utilised spontaneous reviews from previous guests of these hospitality businesses as the foundation for analysis, enhancing the data's authenticity compared to the information obtained from researcher-led surveys. Prior research has confirmed that social media platforms serve as crucial facilitators for consumers in many elements of their vacation planning procedures. Travellers often rely on social media as a source of prior experiences to mitigate perceived risk and uncertainty, as travel is an intangible idea that cannot be evaluated in advance (Ayeh et al., 2013). Lastly, it expands the limits of qualitative analysis by utilising Leximancer software, providing a technique for analysing text in the field of Hospitality studies.

6.2 Practical contribution

The contribution of this research is, on the methodological level, to use qualitative analysis to further the meanings of luxury hospitality (Correia et al., 2022). Essentially, the study provides valuable insights to hotel management and legislators on the significance of customising luxury amenities to meet the specific requirements of contemporary visitors. Hoteliers should prioritise creating customised experiences that align with the individual values of visitors. This approach can result in increased pleasure and loyalty. The acquired knowledge can direct the creation of novel products and services that conform to the concept of “Quiet Tourism”, thereby impacting policy and decision-making within the luxury hotel industry. It is essential to consider how these observations might guide high-end hotels' practical and long-term choices to meet the changing demands of affluent tourists. These insights indicate that hotel administrations should focus on achieving excellence by providing physical facilities and creating personalised and memorable experiences and “service” that cater to guests' need for exclusivity and personal recognition. It can serve as a valuable instrument for comprehending consumer preferences, strategising service enhancements, or instructing personnel in a hotel or resort environment, therefore guaranteeing an efficient allocation of resources to enhance the hospitality experience.

Lastly, our study employed Leximancer software, a robust tool for elucidating the motivations and intentions of guests, which has already attracted the interest of other experts

in the field of tourism (Wu et al., 2014). These findings will facilitate the widespread adoption of this approach, affirming its status as a leading method in the realm of hospitality.

6.3 Limitations

While these findings provide interesting insights, it is important to highlight the limitations of this study. The suggested approach necessitates more verification and affirmation in subsequent investigations, particularly considering the potential influence of contributor or self-selection bias in online posting (Rodrigues et al., 2017). The current study's weaknesses mainly stem from the data being confined to user-generated content, which may not capture the full breadth of the luxury experience as individual posting behaviours and platform dynamics influence it. This study relied on written responses from online platforms, such as TripAdvisor.com, instead of conducting face-to-face interviews, which would have allowed for a more thorough exploration of luxury experiences. Extracted data from online reviews may compromise its reliability and create sampling bias since individuals who contribute to online evaluations may represent a less diverse sample, consequently exerting influence on the outcomes.

One further constraint of this study is the limited quantity of unfavourable evaluations, which would not constitute a sufficiently extensive sample to detect all the aspects of an experience that must be evaluated. The limited amount of negative evaluations written is a positive indication for the industry. However, this may have hindered the study's capacity to discover a wide variety of probable dissatisfaction factors and influenced the interpretation of the results.

6.4 Future Research

Future studies should do a comparison analysis with other types of luxury tourism in order to compare the findings and enhance the comprehension of luxury perceptions across the whole industry. Furthermore, research might investigate the influence of “Quiet Tourism” on local economies and environmental sustainability, offering a more comprehensive view of the consequences of this phenomenon. Also, quantitative research might enhance this study by offering statistical confirmation of the highlighted themes. Considering that this study has identified essential concepts related to luxury hospitality, future research might concentrate on

exploring a more comprehensive array of features and assessing these features with more precision.

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